

Leyburn (John) 1811

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A Pastoral Letter

FROM

The Four Catholic Bishops

To the Lay-Catholics of *England*.

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E piscopal Authority, dear Brethren, of which you and your Catholic Ancestors have been long deprived; being lately, by a merciful Providence of God, and the Piety of his Majesty, restored unto you: And Our Persons, though unworthy of such a Dignity, made Choice of to bear the Weight, and undergo the Sollicitude annexed to it: We have judged it proper, before we separate ourselves in Order to a Discharge of our Duties in the respective Counties committed to our Care, to join in a common Address unto you all, hoping that what comes thus directed by an united Application, will make a deeper Impression on your minds and dispose you to an easier Compliance with the fatherly Admonitions, which every one in his particular District, shall think fit to be made unto you.

Your Condition for many Years past hath been such as enabled you to manifest a Steadfastness in your Religion, rather by suffering

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ing for it in your own Persons, than by contributing actively towards the Planting it in the Minds and Hearts of your Fellow-Subjects. The Exercise of it hath been private and precarious, tending rather towards the Preservation of it in yourselves, than a Propagation of it in others. But now ye are in Circumstances of letting it appear Abroad; and edifying your Neighbours by Professing it publickly, and living up to the Rules prescribed by it.

We need not tell you, what Obligation you lie under on this Account, and how unjustifiable your Behaviour will be in the Judgment of God and Men, if it be not conformable to those Rules; if the Liberty you enjoy, of Professing your Religion, be not improved into the Practices suitable to the Sanctity thereof; and if the Truth of your Faith be not manifested by an Exemplarity in your Lives.

1 Tim. i. Charity, which the Apostle declares to be the End of the Law, is the Virtue by which your Faith is to operate, and be kept alive: Your Understandings may be united without it, but your Hearts cannot. This latter Union is that which maintains the former, and renders it useful towards obtaining the End for which it is bestowed upon you.

We cannot mind you of this important Duty, with Words more expressive of what we desire, than those which the same Apostle made Use of to exhort the *Ephesians*: We conjure you, as he did them,
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to the Lay-Catholics of England.

to walk in a Manner worthy of the Vocation by which you are called, with all Humility and Meekness, with Patience supporting one another in Charity, solicitous for maintaining the Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

You see of how great Concern this Unity of Spirit is unto you, by the Care that the Apostle takes to have it well guarded. You likewise may observe the Quality of the Guard which is set to secure it. The Employment of ordinary Guards is to secure Peace, but here Peace itself is appointed to be the Guard: Peace in the first Place with God, by an entire Submission to the Orders of his Divine Providence, from which co-naturally follows a Peace within yourselves, and a Peace with your Fellow-Subjects.

As Peace is a secure Guard to the Spirit of true Religion and Piety, so it is by the Apostle ranked in the third Place among the Fruits of the Spirit. The Soul centers in God by Charity, and finding there an entire Satisfaction, rests in Peace.

Our Intention in exhorting you to a Practice of Charity, is not that it be confined to Persons of your own Religion: Such Confinement would be a Destruction of it; for true Charity has no Bounds. You must love those of your Religion, because they are so; and others, that as they profess themselves to be Christians, they may become Members of the Catholic Church. You must evidence your Love towards these, by an inoffensiveness in your Behaviour.

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The Memory of past Hardships, which you have suffered from amongst them, may be apt to create provoking Animosities; and the Liberty you now enjoy may possibly tempt you to insult over those, who formerly abridged you of it: But it must be your Care to prevent or suppress all such irregular Motions. You must endeavour to tread in the Foot-steps of our Divine Master, who was so far from making such passionate Returns, that he did not forbear, even in the Height of his Persecutions, to signalize the Excess of his Charity to those who were guilty of them. *St. Peter* puts you in Mind of this, proposing the Example of Christ to your Imitation; who when his Enemies treated him with most outrageous Language, was far from answering them in the same Dialect: When he was provoked by them to the highest Degree of a just Indignation, he did not so much as threaten them with the Exercise of his Power; the same Apostle leaving us a Character of true Christians, declares, They must be unanimous, compassionate, Lovers of the Brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble, not rendering Evil for Evil, Railing for Railing; but, on the contrary, returning Blessings to those, who treated them in this Manner.

Now if in Quality of true Christians, you ought to live up to this Character; if you ought to make it good in the most provoking Circumstances, that Providence might place you in; what is to be expected from you in these which at present you are favoured with?

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You are indulged in a publick Exercise of your Religion; a great Part of the Nation, whose Persuasion in Points of Religion, doth differ most from yours, and which in Time past hath been severe upon your Persons, is willing to enter into a friendly Correspondence with you; and if some others do repine at your being Sharers in the Liberty, which themselves enjoy with much greater Advantage; the most effectual Means to convince them of their Error, is to edify them by your good Example. You live under a Prince of your own Religion, to whom, next unto God, you owe this Felicity. You have his Power to protect you in the free Exercise of your Religion, and his Example to encourage your Discharge of this Duty in a most edifying Manner.

His Majesty's Assiduousness at the Divine Service, and other Functions performed in his Chapel, notwithstanding the Multitude of weighty Affairs, which might frequently excuse him from such Attendance; the respectful Posture in which he performs his Religious Duty, and which argues a Presence of Mind, no less than of his Body, cannot but invite you, both as good Catholics and good Subjects to a conformity with so eminent a Pattern. What Business can dispense you from Discharging these Obligations, when you see his Majesty under the Weight of the whole Government so punctual in his Compliance with them?

It may seem needless to suggest unto you another Obligation you lie under, not only of
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Passive Obedience to his Majesty's Orders relating to the Government, but also of an active and chearful Concurrence with him therein: Your own Safety and Interest being concerned in this, and depending on it, are sufficient Inducements for your endeavouring to give full Satisfaction in this Point.

His Majesty has been graciously pleased, not only to favour you with his Royal Protection, but moreover, to honour many amongst you with a Share of the Government under him. He hath admitted you to Employments both Civil and Military, from which by the Severity of our Laws you have formerly been excluded. He hath placed you in Circumstances of manifesting to the World, that it was neither Want of Loyalty nor Ability, that occasioned your former Exclusion. He hath capacitated you hereby to remove the Prejudices, which in former Reigns, your Religion and Persons have lain under. So that henceforth there will be no Reason to apprehend your being Sufferers, or that your Fellow-Subjects will be preferr'd before you in Management of publick Trusts, on their Accounts, since Religion is no longer a Bar to your Preferment.

We therefore earnestly desire those amongst you, who are already in Offices, so to behave themselves in them, that neither his Majesty may have Occasion to repent, nor his other Subjects to repine at the Choice he hath made of them. We exhort those, who are not yet in publick Employment, to bear their Lots with Modesty and Patience, without Murmuring

ing or Envy: We conjure you all to abstain from Speaking or Acting any Thing that may seem to have the least indecent Reflexion upon the Government: The Councils of Kings are sacred, as well as their Persons; and it is a Kind of Sacrilege in Subjects to be too bold with either: Their Duty is not to approach their Persons, but with Respect; nor discourse of their Councils without Submission.

Let every Soul (we speak to you again in the Words of St. Paul) be subject to higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God: *Rom. xiii.* Therefore he that resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they who resist, do purchase to themselves Damnation. What in this Text of the Apostle is said of higher Powers, must be understood not only of the Supreme Authority, which is seated in the King's Person, but proportionably also of that which his Majesty is pleased to impart to his Ministers of State, and other Magistrates in their respective Stations. It is the King that acts principally in, and by those subordinate Officers: His Royal Character being stamped upon them, challengeth respect from the rest of his Subjects, and renders their Failings therein a Trespas in some Measure against Majesty itself.

Having thus minded you of the general and more substantial Duties incumbent on you. We do not judge it either necessary or proper to descend *at present* to such others, as are of a *more special* Nature: Occasions hereafter will

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will not be wanting of inculcating these, when we enter into our respective Provinces, where we are to dedicate our Labours to your spiritual Improvement. And we hope to find such Dispositions, as by rendering our Pastoral Sollicitude profitable to you, may make it easy and comfortable to ourselves. Pray for us. And the God of Peace, who brought out from the Dead, the great Pastor of the Sheep, in the Blood of the Eternal Testament, Our Lord Jesus Christ, fit you in all Goodness, working in you, that which is pleasing in his Sight.

Your most affectionate

Servants in Christ,

John, *Bishop of Adramite*, V. A.
 Bonaventure, *Bishop of Madoura*, V. A.
 Philip, *Bishop of Aureliople*, V. A.
 James, *Bishop of Callipoli*, V. A.

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☛ V. A. signifies *Vicar Apostolic*. And these four *Bishops*, that for the Time were consecrated with Titles in *Partibus Infidelium*, till Opportunity served to translate them to *English* Bishopricks, have been succeeded constantly by such others, from the *Pope*, at the Nomination of the *Pretender*.